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Ministerial segment: ministerial round tables

Summaries of multi-stakeholder round tables

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Ministerial round table A.3, on the theme "Partnerships in financing for development"

Tuesday, 19 March 2002 (afternoon)

1. Ministers regarded the draft Monterrey Consensus as the embodiment of a new partnership for development, although a number of participants felt that it is not sufficiently far-reaching. There was broad agreement that its adoption must be followed by a strong focus on implementation and translation from words into action if it is to become a meaningful global initiative. Political will and leadership — in both the developed and the developing countries — will be key factors determining its ultimate success.

2. The need to ensure national ownership of development was underlined. The development process must be fully inclusive and the concerns of all must be taken into account in the formulation and implementation of strategies, programmes and projects. External assistance should be regarded as economic cooperation rather than "aid", not as a permanent crutch but as a means of helping developing countries to help themselves. It is of the utmost importance that recipient countries themselves design programmes of reform and poverty eradication and fully own them. Donor countries should support implementation of such programmes instead of requiring recipient countries to follow any donor-designed reforms. The experience of Ireland with the aid received from its European partners was hailed as a good example of ownership, in which the recipient was encouraged to set its own developmental priorities, which were then supported by its partners. The New Partnership for Africa's Development was recognized as an important recent initiative fully owned by the developing countries involved.

3. Within the framework of ownership, partnerships entail a clear understanding of the reciprocal commitments and mutual obligations of all parties involved in development. Ministers endorsed the concept of partnership as a central principle of

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international development cooperation, but felt that further work will be required to refine the new commitment to partnership into concrete results.

4. Different aspects of the concept of partnership were stressed, including partnerships between developing countries, among developing countries and between the public and the private business sectors, as well as those involving various branches of civil society, including NGOs and trade unions. One of the key aspects of the concept of partnership is the need to fully recognize the role and contribution of those civil society partners. Participants also emphasized the need to incorporate the gender perspective into all development programmes and projects.

5. Several examples were provided of the need for and benefits of partnerships within countries. It was recognized that the State's responsibility for development must be shared with a range of other stakeholders within and outside the countries. The private sector has a comparative advantage in some areas, although there are a number of risks and activities that are best left in the realm of the State. In some cases, public-private partnerships provide a means of taking advantage of the strengths of both parties. Several participants provided examples of such public-private collaboration.

6. Official development assistance (ODA) was universally recognized as indispensable to meeting the millennium development goals, particularly in the poorest countries. Attention should be focused on supporting national efforts to improve education and health, including AIDS, but there is also a manifest need for capacity-building, including in the management of ODA; some participants felt that infrastructure development no longer receives adequate attention in aid programmes.

7. The accountability of both donors and recipients of aid was widely stressed. Recipients of aid should be accountable to both their citizens and donors in terms of commitment to sound governance and policies, but donors are also accountable to recipients in many ways, including in such respects as the volume, quality and effectiveness of their aid. Developed countries should make their own accountability a priority rather than leaving it to NGOs.

8. The need to enhance coherence and coordination in international development assistance was emphasized. Developing countries are often required to comply with varying conditions in order to receive aid because donors' priorities and procedures differ. Improved coordination among donors could reduce the burden on recipient countries, particularly small States.

9. Many ministers emphasized that public awareness about the importance of closing the poverty gap needs to be raised in the developed countries. There is a need to increase recognition of the need for and effectiveness of ODA in order to increase public support for additional flows. The Conference has already had a positive impact in that respect; the media could be an important partner in continuing that effort. Appreciation was expressed for the proposed increases in flows that have been announced by some major donors in the days prior to the Conference, but there is concern that ODA will still fall far short of both the estimates of the flows required to ensure that the millennium development goals are met and the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product.

10. There was an emphasis on the need for coherence among the trade, finance and development policies of developed countries. Several participants highlighted the

impediments to development in developing countries created by protectionism and domestic subsidies in the developed countries.

Proposals going beyond the draft Monterrey Consensus

11. The following represent proposals made by various participants:

- One delegation clarified an earlier announcement regarding an increase in its country's future aid flows;
- One delegation announced that its country would be proposing a global lottery;
- A number of recipient countries recommended that donors delegate full responsibility for the management of their external assistance programmes to their offices in recipient countries;
- It was also proposed that donors pool their resources into a single fund at the country level;
- There was a suggestion that the international financial institutions report on donor countries' performance in terms of volume and quality of aid given, as well as on other development-related policies towards developing countries, such as trade;
- Two private-sector enterprises made proposals concerning learning frameworks and learning networks to build capacity for entrepreneurship and organizational skills in developing countries;
- It was suggested that the United Nations is in an advantageous position to raise public awareness of the need for additional aid flows.